

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
August 10, 2015**

**APPROVED**

**5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864-1198  
853-4000, Town Hall Room, 7:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Commissioners DeGroff, Ianni, Jackson, Scott-Craig, Tenaglia  
ABSENT: Commissioners Cordill, Deits, Honicky, Van Coevering  
STAFF: Principal Planner Oranchak

**1. Call meeting to order**

Chair Scott-Craig called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

**2. Approval of agenda**

**Commissioner DeGroff moved to approve the agenda amended as follows:**

- **Move Agenda Items #7A and #7B before the Public hearings; after Agenda Item #5 and before Agenda Item #6**

**Seconded by Commissioner Jackson.**

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners DeGroff, Ianni, Jackson, Tenaglia, Chair Scott-Craig  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried 5-0.

**3. Approval of Minutes**

**Commissioner DeGroff moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of July 27, 2015.  
Seconded by Commissioner Ianni.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 5-0.

**4. Public Remarks**

Chair Scott-Craig opened and closed the floor for public remarks.

**5. Communications**

Communications received and distributed at the July 27, 2015 meeting and placed on file:

- A. Wm. K Miller & Judith St. King, 4660 Marsh Road, Okemos; RE: Rezoning #00150 (St. King)
- B. Ashley McFarland, Coordinator, MSU AgBio Research, E3774 University Drive, PO Box 168, Chatham; RE: SUP #15081 (Judge)

**6. Public hearings**

- A. Mixed Use Planned Unit Development #15024 (Forsberg) request to develop a mixed use planned unit development north of Jolly Road, west of Jolly Oak Road, and north of Farrins Parkway with a possible decision the same night as the public hearing and
- B. Special Use Permit #15101 (T.A. Forsberg, Inc, and WestPac Michigan), request to construct a group of buildings totaling more than 25,000 square feet in gross floor area

Chair Scott-Craig opened the public hearings at 7:12 P.M.

- Introduction by the Chair (announcement of procedures, time limits and protocols for public participation and applicants)
- Summary of subject matter  
Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the mixed use planned unit development (MUPUD) and special use permit (SUP) requests as outlined in staff memorandums dated August 7, 2015.
- Applicant  
Brent Forsberg, 2422 Jolly Road, Okemos, highlighted materials to be used on the buildings which will contain 378 units. He showed a letter on the overhead from the Greater Lansing Housing Coalition in support of the affordable housing component of the project. Mr. Forsberg addressed the issue of mowing the property in preparation for soil boring tests, noting the property was mowed as it has been for the last ten (10) years using the same pattern used two (2) weekends ago. He stated he understands there may be an issue with the wetland buffer and Gary Marx from Marx Wetlands LLC will walk the property, along with the Township to ensure open disclosure. Mr. Forsberg stressed the importance of effective and positive communication with his neighbors over the last eight (8) months of this process, adding they will coexist for many years.

Will Randall, 4409 Dobie Road, Okemos, addressed the elevation study with their architects from Colorado, showing their intention to comply with the Township's requirement to break up the façade through using a technique which employs a change in materials. He highlighted the elevation his company would like to build through use of stacked stone on the ends of the buildings with galvanized corrugated metal above. Mr. Randall added the stair towers on each end will use a type of steel which goes up shiny and is allowed to rust and becomes mottled looking over time, providing a break in the facade. He added stone will be carried around the ends, with hardy plank in the center portion of the building on the first floor and then break to tone on tone vinyl siding on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. Mr. Randall indicated their intent to use a hardy fiber cement panel around the doors and windows on the other side of the façade, along with galvanized pipe railing for the exterior balconies. He stated the balconies on the interior of the building are cantilevered and not quite as deep (five (5) to six (6) feet in depth).

Mr. Randall noted it is their plan to use a standard 40 year shingle on the roofs. Relative to the height of the buildings, he noted their architect has determined a height of 45-1/2 feet to the top of the stair tower. Mr. Randall clarified the buildings are three stories served by a stairwell; on the top ends of each building is a three bedroom penthouse unit with a half floor above, accessed only within each unit. He added the unit mix for the project is a junior one bedroom of 550 square feet up to over 2,000 square feet in the 3 bedroom end units.

Mr. Randall explained there are three building types:

- Type 1 is 180 feet long
- Type 2 is 125 feet long
- Type 3 is 138 feet long

He added each building type has the same basic façade. Mr. Randall offered that Phase I will consist of 7 buildings which contain 126 units, with a mix of bedroom types.

- **Public**  
Neil Bowlby, 6020 Beechwood Drive, Haslett, stated two questions on the health impact assessment asked about the source of water which weren't answered. He also indicated the percentage of impervious surface was not covered in the questionnaire, although he believed one of the site plans determined it to be 58%. Mr. Bowlby stated the health equity food system portion of the questionnaire inquired about whether the dwelling units will be smoke free, and was unsure why the applicant replied in the affirmative.

The applicant responded smoking will not be allowed in the apartments.

Mr. Bowlby critiqued the language in condition #3 of the resolution regarding the number of amenities, suggesting it be reworded to say "approval is subject to the following amenities..." to ensure all amenities offered by the applicant are listed. He also discussed the use of "should" v. "shall" as contained in condition #13, noting that use of the word "should" does not require all utility service distribution lines to be installed underground. Mr. Bowlby indicated the environmental study identified areas of groundwater vulnerability citing the map from the Master Plan, which he believes does not actually show areas of groundwater vulnerability and does not offer data.

Debbie Elliott, 3720 Taos Circle, Coyote Creek, Okemos, offered her research material which she stated indicated negative effects from high density living include levels of noise, odors or unwanted interactions with others; as density increases, so does the feeling of annoyance towards the surrounding environment. She did not understand the need to "cram" so many people into this area. Ms. Elliott stated she moved to Okemos for the rural atmosphere and is not excited about the project.

Ann Zimmerman, 2334 Coyote Creek, Okemos, believed the buildings will be too tall. She voiced her continued objection to the project.

- **Planning Commission discussion:**  
Commissioner Tenaglia inquired what percentage of the project will have vinyl siding.

Mr. Randall stated he did not have that percentage with him this evening but would provide the information to the Planning Commissioners. He offered a rough estimate of less than 25-30% of the total face of the building.

Commissioner Ianni stated the staff report noted many parking spaces were missing from the required number. He asked the applicant if there was an expectation of considerable alternative transportation or other rationale for the substantial reduction in parking.

Mr. Randall replied the parking ratios computed for Okemos Pointe were verified as more than adequate by Bowen National Research, a company which performs market research for projects throughout the country. He indicated he has had discussions with Jackson National Life (JNL), Dart and Delta Dental regarding the possibility of an electric bus which would travel on a circuit to those three (3) businesses, and would be owned and operated by the community. He believed such an alternative would give tenants the option to eliminate vehicles. Mr. Randall acknowledged the proposal is underparked for requirements by Meridian Township, but adequately parked for the project, noting it would be "disastrous" for the developer to underpark Okemos Pointe.

Commissioner Jackson asked what the potential neighbors (surrounding businesses) think about the underparking plan.

Mr. Randall replied there has not been a discussion with nearby business owners regarding possible use of their parking as the developer does not anticipate that issue to be a problem. He added business owners can post signage which would prevent residents from parking in the space allotted for nearby businesses.

Chair Scott-Craig asked the applicant if there was any part of the project which would allow for wiggle room if they were underparked in Phase 1.

Mr. Randall responded if they determine Phase 1 is underparked, the applicant would modify the site plan or eliminate a building. He added he intends to have a conversation with the Hilton Home and Staybridge Suites regarding utilizing a portion of their parking area for overflow, particular as it relates to the use of the fitness center.

Commissioner Jackson asked as to the rationale for use of metal on the buildings, since the Township ordinance discourages its use.

Mr. Randall responded it is an upscale architectural element used in commercial construction, and believed the Township ordinance probably had “something else” in mind. He noted it is a robust material that weathers well and requires little long term maintenance.

Chair Scott-Craig noted vinyl is also discouraged in Township ordinance and the applicant has proposed one third of the building covered in vinyl.

Mr. Randall stated vinyl siding was proposed for long term maintenance, as it does not need to be painted and holds up well in Michigan weather. He added vinyl siding has significantly progressed in the last decade and is proposed to be installed away from the ground. As a side note, Mr. Randall offered vinyl siding is currently being used on a wide spread basis on \$1 million single family homes in this market.

Commissioner Jackson asked whether Water Lily Way is a private or public road.

Mr. Randall responded Water Lily Way is private and will remain private as a part of Okemos Pointe, which will be maintained by the community.

Commissioner Jackson asked if Mr. Forsberg owned Water Lily Way.

Mr. Forsberg responded Water Lily Way was not dedicated into a public road, is part of the Forsberg property, will remain private and will be maintained by Okemos Pointe as part of the project.

Commissioner Jackson inquired as to who is the owner of Farrins Parkway.

Farrins Parkway is a private road maintained by Forsberg, the hotel group and the Michigan Dental Association and is part of the condominium when the hotel group and the Michigan Dental Association projects were constructed through the condominium act.

Commissioner Jackson requested verification the issues regarding usage and maintenance on the two private roads will be resolved without Ingham County Road Department (ICRD) input.

Mr. Forsberg replied in the affirmative.

Principal Planner Oranchak added the design is reviewed and approved by the Township using specific standards, which are typically ICRD standards even though they are private roads.

Commissioner Jackson inquired if the wetlands have been delineated.

Mr. Forsberg responded the wetlands were delineated as part of the professional office rezoning approximately ten (10) years ago. He noted the land will be walked next week with Gary Marx to ensure the wetland delineation has not changed and there is no encroachment.

Commissioner Jackson reiterated the wetland delineation has been updated, as it was not included in the Planning Commission packet.

Jeff Kyes, KEBS, Inc. 2116 Haslett Road, clarified the flagging has been completed by Gary Marx, and is currently being surveyed. He added it will take an additional five (5) to six (6) days to place the delineation "on paper."

Chair Scott-Craig stated one of the conditions is that the township wetland consultant has reviewed the wetlands and inquired as to the status of the consultant's review.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded the Township wetland consultant must wait until the applicant's survey work is complete in order to assess whether there is agreement on the flagging. She added there is always the possibility of a modification based on the Township consultant's investigation.

Chair Scott-Craig stated the Planning Commission does not currently have specific information as to the location of the boundaries and the setbacks with regard to where the buildings have been proposed.

Mr. Kyes stated that although there is not a definitive new delineation, they believe it is very close to the old one. He offered history that the wetlands were set up as a limited or general common element of the condominium that had a built-in buffer and they used that to compute the location of the buildings.

Principal Planner Oranchak inserted the setback depends on the size of the wetland and the closest 20 feet is always the natural vegetation strip.

Commissioner DeGroff asked for the rationale behind the Township discouraging metal and vinyl building material.

Principal Planner Oranchak believed it was because of the quality of the materials as the Township was looking for better quality based on giving the applicant exemptions from the Township ordinances.

Commissioner DeGroff asked the applicant if he wasn't going to use metal and vinyl, what type of material would be used.

Mr. Randall responded the choice of material to be used is an integral part of the modern mountain architecture theme the applicant is attempting to achieve and the elevation is a large part of that look. He believed it difficult to provide an alternative material which would still achieve the desired appearance. Mr. Randall noted use of these materials are currently being installed by DTN in the Vista Project at Eastwood Towne Center.

Relative to the number of parking spaces, Commissioner DeGroff expressed skepticism that residents could live in this development without use of an automobile.

Mr. Randall responded he was not proposing no car, but possibly one (1) car instead of two (2) in the two (2) bedroom apartments. He indicated the reduced parking calculations used numbers that have been successfully used around the country and there is proof these numbers are more than adequate for a similar project.

Commissioner DeGroff asked the applicant to repeat the calculations used to determine the number of parking spaces.

Mr. Randall listed them as follows:

- Junior one bedrooms were assigned one (1) parking space per unit
- One (1) bedroom units were assigned one and one half (1-½) parking spaces per unit
- Two (2) and three (3) bedroom units were assigned two (2) parking spaces per unit

Commissioner Jackson stated she does not believe pathways and sidewalks, underground utilities, LED lighting, awnings and balconies should be counted as amenities.

Mr. Kyes responded the amenities are listed in the Township's ordinance.

Chair Scott-Craig voiced appreciation for many of the elements being provided by the applicant in this development. He stated what is being built is a multi-family project in what is commercially zoned space. Chair Scott-Craig addressed the building setbacks from the property line which are short, asking if there was a way that some of the setbacks can be adjusted to be more in line with residential to residential setbacks, rather than commercial to residential setbacks. Chair Scott-Craig believed doing so would eliminate the extent and number of variances.

Chair Scott-Craig also was concerned with the setbacks from streets, noting the standard is 25 feet and there are a number of those setbacks which are less than 25 feet and should be looked at. He expressed interest in review of the reduced parking area setbacks as well, as one of the setbacks is only three (3) feet.

Mr. Kyes clarified Water Lily Way is an easement to serve other parcels and will be used for off-street parking. He indicated the setbacks from public streets are off Jolly Road where the buildings currently exist. Relative to the parking area setback near the fitness center, he indicated it was problematic to meet any other standard and also meet the depth of the parking space and width of the drive isle. The three (3) foot setback was as much buffer as "doable" between the parking lot for the fitness center and commercial next door.

Chair Scott-Craig maintained setbacks are an issue considering there will be a fair amount of traffic on the private streets. He questioned whether the proposed three (3) foot setback would be reasonable given the typical setback is 20 feet.

Chair Scott-Craig pointed out the Smith Drain is under study and believed there was 50 feet across the Smith Drain.

Mr. Kyes clarified there is a 50 foot natural feature setback in the Township ordinance from a line called “top of bank” of the Smith Drain. He indicated the buildings along the drain will be within 50 feet of the top of the bank of the drain.

Chair Scott-Craig stated it is difficult to ascertain compliance without all of the data needed to make that determination.

Chair Scott-Craig expressed concern with the drainage plan, while acknowledging that is something which will be vetted later in the process. He noted he attended a talk by Ingham County Drain Commissioner (ICDC) Pat Lindemann, during which Mr. Lindemann indicated his desire to have drainage systems treat the first inch of water so the water and its contents never reach the river. He suggested the Planning Commission be provided with specific information that the stormwater will be retained.

Mr. Kyes responded the detention will be taken care of and the applicant must treat the first inch per the ICDC. He stated a plan was included in the packet which shows some stormwater management which depicted areas of treatment (rain gardens or bioswales). Mr. Kyes indicated that at this point, the applicant is not required to supply grading plans or perform stormwater calculations. He noted the ICDC sets the requirements, and those requirements must be met or the project will not move forward, adding he has alerted the ICDC the property has sufficient room to treat the first inch. Once the project reaches that point, Mr. Kyes indicated stormwater management will be shown when full design is completed.

Chair Scott-Craig addressed the issue of fencing along the drain where there is a six (6) to eight (8) foot drop. He inquired if the steep drop off would be a safety concern.

Mr. Kyes replied that issue has not “come up”, and the same drain down the west side of Okemos Road becomes deeper as it gets closer to the river. He stated a fence can certainly be discussed, but the ICDC must give permission as regulations prohibit a fence within the easement.

Chair Scott-Craig spoke to the novelty of the rental office/clubhouse.

Mr. Randall clarified the function of that building will primarily be one of a leasing office, but the amenity piece of the clubhouse aspects of the project will be in the fitness facility.

Chair Scott-Craig requested clarification by staff between height and peak.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded measurement depends upon the shape of the roof. She indicated staff used the drawings provided by the applicant to estimate the height of the roof.

Mr. Randall added the drawings were scaled by the architect, but not to scale.

Ms. Oranchak replied staff decided to measure to the top, because it is not strictly the roof type that is actually a peaked roof.

Mr. Randall stated it is a half-peaked roof. He noted he will obtain clarification from the architect as to where it is being measured to ascertain the height.

John Scott-Craig spoke to elevations of the fitness center as it relates to articulation.

Mr. Forsberg replied the fitness center building exists and the steel structure in place will remain. He noted the front of the building (visible from Jolly Oak Road) is flat with a casement style center and a center door. Mr. Forsberg stated it is his intention to bring the peak up and pull out the roof to add architectural steel or timber in the front with the addition of a window feature for curb appeal, adding the pitch of the roof on the sides will be raised.

John Scott-Craig spoke to the common area and gazebo, requesting an explanation from the applicant.

Mr. Forsberg responded he still intends to construct an open air pavilion near the pond. He indicated the area still being worked on is the diamond shaped park to be used as a central gathering area.

Chair Scott-Craig voiced concern with the drain traversing through an area where children will be playing. He did not believe there were other residences with the same proximity to other portions of the drain.

Mr. Forsberg indicated he will drive the entire drain to look at its proximity to other residential developments.

Chair Scott-Craig closed the public hearings at 8:33 P.M.

The request by the applicant to suspend its rules in order to act upon this item the same night as the public hearing was considered.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Complexity of the large development and public input would weigh against suspension against the Planning Commission's bylaw
- Planning Commissioner belief there is no sense of urgency as this large project has been before public bodies since the beginning of the year
- Need for additional information on wetlands prior to the next meeting
- Many of the Planning Commission members are absent this evening
- Suggestion by one Planning Commissioner to amend the resolution provided in the packet as follows:
  - Amend condition #3 (as expressed by a member of the public) by deleting "one or more amenities. The applicant proposes" on the first line
  - Amend condition #13 by deleting "should" and inserting "shall"
- Reminder by the Chair the Planning Commission is making a recommendation to the Board and Board resolutions normally say shall

## **7. Unfinished Business**



- A. Special Use Permit #15081 (Judge), request to open a light manufacturing business at 1870 Grand River Ave.

Principal Planner Oranchak stated there is agreement to use the parking spaces associated with the building immediately south which has frontage along Grand River Avenue.

**Commissioner Tenaglia moved [and read into the record] NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN hereby approves Special Use Permit #15081 (Judge) to establish a light manufacturing operation (malt processing facility) at 1870 Grand River Avenue subject to the following conditions:**

- 1. The applicant shall obtain all other necessary and applicable permits and approvals from the Michigan Department of Agriculture, and all other relevant entities.**
- 2. Prior to construction inside the building the applicant shall obtain all necessary and applicable permits from the Township.**

**Seconded by Commissioner Ianni.**

Planning Commission discussion:

- Good use of land locked property
- Project will generate very minimal traffic
- Malt will not produce obnoxious odors

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners DeGroff, Ianni, Jackson, Tenaglia, Chair Scott-Craig  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried 5-0.

- B. Rezoning #15030 (Sumbal), request to rezone approximately 1.4 acres addressed as 1998 Jolly Road from RR (Rural Residential) to RA (Single Family, Medium Density)

**Commissioner DeGroff moved [and read into the record] NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN hereby recommends approval of Rezoning #15030 to rezone approximately 1.4 acres located at 1998 Jolly Road from RR (Rural Residential) to RA (Single Family-Medium Density). Seconded by Commissioner Jackson.**

Planning Commission discussion:

- Property is an island of rural residential (RR) in an area of RA zoned property
- Property frontage on Jolly Road is 198 feet and can be divided into two RA parcels according to the ordinance

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners DeGroff, Ianni, Jackson, Tenaglia, Chair Scott-Craig  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried 5-0.

**8. Other Business (None)**

**9. Township Board, Planning Commission officer, committee chair, and staff comment or reports**

Chair Scott-Craig reiterated his attendance at the community conversation hosted by the ICDC, which offered a great deal of information on the history of water use such as the origin of the Red Cedar River.

A. Future Projects/New Applications

- i. Rezoning #00150 (St. King) request to rezone 4660 Marsh Road from RC (Multiple Family, Medium Density) to PO (Professional and Office)
- ii. Mixed Use Planned Unit Development #15034, (Meridian Investment Group), request to redevelop office buildings into retail space and apartments at 4970-5030 Northwind Drive
- iii. Special Use Permit #15121 (Meridian Investment Group), request to redevelop a group of buildings greater than 25,000 square feet in gross floor area at 4970-5030 Northwind Drive
- iv. Special Use Permit #15111 (Williams), request to construct a deck in the floodplain at 2568 Tekonsha

B. Update of Ongoing Projects

- i. Site Plans Received – NONE
- ii. Site Plans Approved - NONE

**10. Public remarks**

Chair Scott-Craig opened and closed public remarks.

**14. Adjournment**

Chair Scott-Craig adjourned the regular meeting at 8:38 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto  
Recording Secretary